

André Lossky – Goran Sekulovski (éd.)

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Actes édités par

André Lossky et Heinzgerd Brakmann  
avec la collaboration de Barbara Hallensleben

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Comité scientifique :

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Flemming Fleinert-Jensen – André Lossky – Marcel Metzger –  
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## THE *ORDO CELEBRANDI MATRIMONIUM* 1991 AS A CASE STUDY FOR THE CREATIVE EXCHANGE BETWEEN LITURGICAL TRADITIONS AND THEOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENTS

« Marriage is both a social institution and a religious event ».<sup>1</sup> As a social institution, marriage constitutes social bonds and enhances relationships in society. Recognizing the significant role of marriage and family in a society, the family is exalted as the fundamental cell of the society, domestic Church, school of deeper humanity. These brief but deep expressions rightly emphasize the pivotal role of marriage, and the family that is formed from it, in every society and the Church. As a religious event, marriage takes place through ritual ceremonies characterized by customs and practices which are rooted in the cultural traditions and religious convictions of the society to which the spouses belong.

Given this background, the Christian rites of marriage, too, have been shaped by the religious convictions and customs of the cultures and contexts in which the Christian faith emerged and flourished. This understanding could be underlined and substantiated by liturgists and according to them the texts of the rites of marriage in the past were « not the work of theologians or canonists, but of anonymous and long-dead pastors »<sup>2</sup> and, consequently, these documents « witness to what nameless believers have found to say about marriage ».<sup>3</sup> Marking a major departure from such a past, the 1991 typical edition of the *Ordo Celebrandi Matrimonium* could be considered as an outcome of the theologically oriented stipulations of the Second Vatican Council for the renewal of the rite of marriage. And therefore, after the Council, a long process was involved in the for-

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<sup>1</sup> Mark Searle and Kenneth W. Stevenson, *Documents of the Marriage Liturgy* (Collegeville : Liturgical Press, 1992), 1.

<sup>2</sup> Searle and Stevenson, *Documents of the Marriage Liturgy*, 261; Mark Searle, « Marriage Rites as Documents of Faith : Notes for a Theology of Marriage », in *Vision: The Scholarly Contributions of Mark Searle to Liturgical Renewal*, ed. Anne Y. Koester and Barbara Searle (Collegeville : Liturgical Press, 2004), 243. It is quoted by Paul Covino, when he wrote an introduction to this article of Searle.

<sup>3</sup> Searle and Stevenson, *Documents of the Marriage Liturgy*, 261, Searle, « Marriage Rites as Documents of Faith », 243.

mulation of the new rite of marriage by the consultation of the particular study groups under the guidance of the theologians. Given the above observation, could the recognition of such a process involved in the formulation of the 1991 *Ordo Celebrandi Matrimonium*<sup>4</sup> challenge the conviction that it proposed? Hence, in this paper we investigate the relationship between liturgical traditions and the theological developments.

This paper has four parts. The first part is comprised of a brief survey of the historical evolution of the rite of marriage of the Roman Catholic Church up to the Second Vatican Council. In the second part, we examine how the discussions and the suggestions of the Second Vatican Council were instrumental in the renewal of the rite of marriage. In the third part, a comparison and analysis of the two typical editions of the marriage of 1969 and 1991 are made in order to highlight the real impetus and impact of the Council on the new Rite of Marriage. Having done that, the fourth part explores the extent the *Ordo Celebrandi Matrimonium* 1991 can be considered as a case study where the creative exchanges between liturgical traditions and theological investigations have happened.

## 1. THE ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE CHRISTIAN RITE OF MARRIAGE OF THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

In the very early years of the Roman Church, marriage was exclusively conducted in a family atmosphere and there was no specified rite to indicate that it had any ecclesial implication. Even in cases where the Eucharist was celebrated as a part of the celebrations, neither the Eucharist nor the priest was an essential part of the celebration.<sup>5</sup> Coming to the fourth century, with the proclamation of the Christian religion as the official religion of the Roman Empire, the rites of marriage became more solemn. Though not a custom, there were occasions when bishops and priests were invited to the wedding to confer their blessing on the newly married couple after the family marriage rituals were concluded.<sup>6</sup> But it was only optional and not mandatory. In a letter of Ignatius of Antioch to Polycarp, we find a recommendation to have the *consent* of the bishop for a *spiritual* motive. Ignatius of Antioch writes: « When men and women marry, the union should be made with the consent of the Bishop, so that the marriage may be according to the Lord and not merely lust ».<sup>7</sup> Even in this proposal, we can notice that the consent of the bishop has no constitutive role for the effect or validity of the marriage, but is recommended only from a spiritual point of view. Often the pre-

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<sup>4</sup> Henceforth, it will be known as ROCM.



sence and blessing of the bishop were looked upon as a personal favor to the family of the couple.

Though the nuptial blessing was not an essential part of the matrimonial rite as celebrated by Christians in the first centuries of the Roman Church's history, it deserves a special mention that an ecclesiastical blessing was prescribed in the rite for the marriages of deacons and priests.<sup>8</sup> Different *sacramentaries* such as the *Leonine Sacramentary*, the *Gregorian Sacramentary*, and the *Gelasian Sacramentary* give important information about how marriage was celebrated in the fifth and the eighth centuries. According to these liturgical texts, the rite of marriage consisted of the blessing by the priest, the veiling of the bride,<sup>9</sup> and the bridegroom's putting a ring on the bride's finger. These rites were not observed uniformly in every instance of marriage, but they were « strongly recommended ».<sup>10</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Herman Schmidt, « Rituals and Sacramentality of Marriage », *Studia Missionalia* 23 (1974), 260.

<sup>6</sup> Joseph Martos, *Doors to the Sacred: A Historical Introduction to Sacraments in the Catholic Church* (Missouri: Liguori/Triumph, 2001), 368.

<sup>7</sup> Ignatius of Antioch, « Letter to Polycarp », in *The Apostolic Fathers*, ed. Roy Joseph Deferrari, *The Fathers of the Church* (Washington : The Catholic University of America Press, 1969), 126. It is a most oft-quoted reference in relation to marriage in earlier periods. For example, see also, Kenneth W. Stevenson, *Nuptial Blessing: a Study of Christian Marriage Rites*, (London: Alcuin Club, 1982), 13; Schmidt, « Rituals and Sacramentality of Marriage », 259.

<sup>8</sup> Martos, *Doors to the Sacred*, 368. See Edward Schillebeeckx, *Marriage : Human Reality and Saving Mystery* (London : London Sheed & Ward, 1988), 204; Isidore of Seville, *De Ecclesiasticis Officiis*, ed. Dennis D. McManus, trans. Thomas L. Knoebel, *Ancient Christian Writers*, vol. 61 (New York : The Newman Press, 2008), 99; In relation to it we can see that the *Poems of Paulinus* refer to the marriage of the cleric in the Church. Pontius Meropius Paulinus, *The Poems of St. Paulinus of Nola*, ed. Johannes Quasten, Walter Burghardt, and Thomas Comerford Lawler, trans. Patrick Gerard Walsh (New York : Newman Press, 1975), 251, 252.

<sup>9</sup> When we look down into the history of the liturgical rite of veiling of the bride it takes us back to the fourth century where the veiling of the bride was introduced in parallel with the veiling of the virgins. « The veiling of the bride was given, in the *Gregorianum* especially, a liturgical form which was consciously in keeping with the liturgical veiling of the virgin, since the same mystery of the church was symbolized in both, in the case of the bride's veiling indirectly and in the case of the veiling of the virgin directly. Just as a special and publicly recognized place in the Church was assigned to the woman by her dedication as a virgin so was the bride's marriage-contracted civilly within the family – given an ecclesiastical confirmation by the marriage blessing; the Church's solemnization of her marriage gave it a public status within the church ». Schillebeeckx, *Marriage : Human Reality and Saving Mystery*, 310. Searle and Stevenson, *Documents of the Marriage Liturgy*, 255.

<sup>10</sup> Schmidt, « Rituals and Sacramentality of Marriage », 269; Isidore of Seville, *De Ecclesiasticis Officiis*, 99.

With the dawn of the eleventh century, we can notice some remarkable changes that occurred in the rite of marriage : both in its form and in the manner in which it was conducted. One major change concerned the place where the rite was celebrated. Differing from the early phase, where the whole of the rite of marriage was celebrated in the home, marriage was increasingly celebrated at the door of the church, in *facie ecclesiae* : « The medieval Church tried to ensure that persons married *in facie ecclesiae*, but this was not a condition for validity ».<sup>11</sup> The vows were pronounced by the couples at the *door of the church* and the wedding party would be led into the church where they celebrated the Eucharist. Another important feature of marriage was the introduction of the blessing by the priest into the rite of marriage. After the communion, a veil was spread over the new couple and the priest blessed them.<sup>12</sup> The first part of the nuptial ceremony consisted of the expression of mutual consent. The exchange of the rings was performed outside the Church. In a second part of the ceremony, the whole community proceeded to the church for the celebration of mass, where a blessing was given by the priest.<sup>13</sup> Thus, we can see a gradual development about the celebration of marriage at the *facie ecclesiae* to the recognition of marriage exercised within the walls of the Church.

The Council of Trent in 1563 had a great impact on the renewal of the rite of marriage of the Roman Catholic Church, both through its new theology of marriage and the recommendations it proposed for the valid rite of marriage. In its effort to intervene in the situation, the Council's discussions and decisions on marriage were driven by a two-fold motive : « to ensure its public celebration out of respect for the social character of marriage, and to secure its rever-

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<sup>11</sup> Philip Lyndon Reynolds, *Marriage in the Western Church : the Christianization of Marriage During the Patristic and Early Medieval Periods* (Leiden : E.J. Brill, 1994), XIV; Stevenson also points out this shift : « we can discern a gradual shift from a domestic rite, which was led either by a member of the family or a local cleric, to a church wedding, presided over by a bishop or presbyter ». Kenneth W. Stevenson, *Nuptial Blessing : A Study of Christian Marriage Rites*, 20.

<sup>12</sup> In relation to the veiling of the bride, *The Liber Ordinum*, « a collection of Old Spanish or Visigothic rites » gives a detailed documentation. It stipulates that there is « a blessing for the veiling of the bride ». However, the author argues that the prayer for the blessing presented in the text is « certainly out of place » because at that time, « both bride and bridegroom are under the same veil! » Here, we can also see a transition of the *marriage blessing* into the *bridal blessing*. Searle and Stevenson, *Documents of the Marriage Liturgy*, 120.

<sup>13</sup> Martos, *Doors to the Sacred*, 372; See also Searle and Stevenson, *Documents of the Marriage Liturgy*, 120.

ent celebration out of respect for its sacramental character ».<sup>14</sup> It solemnly teaches :

The celebration of the marriage must then take place in open church, during which the parish priest will, by questioning the man and woman, make sure of their consent and then say, *I join you together in marriage, in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit*, or use other words according to the accepted rite of each province.<sup>15</sup>

Thereby, the Council of Trent offered a new form of the expression of the consent and, at the same time, recognized the various forms of celebrations that existed in different cultures. However, the rite of marriage introduced in Tridentine Missal, *Rituale Romanum*, 1614, was not really innovative because it was almost identical to the local missals of that time, but « relatively simple and sober ».<sup>16</sup>

## 2. THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL AND THE RENEWAL OF THE RITE OF MARRIAGE IN THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

Complying with the motto of the Second Vatican Council to renew the Church, *aggiornamento*, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*,<sup>17</sup> made clear recommendations and proposed practical guidelines for the revision of the various aspects and dimensions of the liturgy. Within two paragraphs of the document SC, 77 and 78, the Council set out the guidelines for the reform of the rite of marriage and specified the operational principles for the renewal. The first paragraph of Article 77 of SC clearly emphasizes the need for the revision and enrichment of the rite of marriage and affirms that « [t]he rite of celebrating marriage in the Roman Ritual is to be revised, and made richer » so that it would rightly express the sacramental character of marriage and the responsibilities of the spouses. The second paragraph quotes from the Council of Trent : « If any parts of the world [...] use other praiseworthy customs and ceremonies while celebrating the sacrament of marriage, the synod is very concerned that they be

<sup>14</sup> Searle and Stevenson, Documents of the Marriage Liturgy, 184.

<sup>15</sup> Council of Trent, « Canons on the Reform of Marriage », § 755; Joel Francis Harrington, *Reordering Marriage and Society in Reformation Germany* (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1995), 96.

<sup>16</sup> Searle and Stevenson, Documents of the Marriage Liturgy, 179.

<sup>17</sup> Second Vatican Council, « Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 4 December, 1963 », in *Decrees of the Ecumenical councils: Trent to Vatican II*, ed. Norman Tanner and Giuseppe Alberigo (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 1990). This Constitution on the Liturgy was promulgated by Pope Paul VI on December 4, 1963. Hereafter this constitution will be cited in the text as SC.

preserved in their entirety ».<sup>18</sup> Like the Council of Trent, SC approves and endorses the use of local customs that have a contextual and cultural relevance to the particular rites of marriage. The impact of this openness has far-reaching consequences for the Church, « because it opens up many liberties that include structure as well as content ».<sup>19</sup> The last paragraph of SC 77 authorizes the competent ecclesiastical authorities « to draw up, its own rite, suited to the usages of place and people ». In short, in these guidelines, we can see possibilities for the renewal of the rite of marriage with due respect to the contextual and local customs of the parties involved, but at the same time an affirmation of the undeniable character of marriage as a sacrament.

The Second Vatican Council set out some guidelines which are to be implemented in order to effect concretely the renewal of the rite of marriage. These principles are given in article 78 of SC, and in a way complement the spirit of the guidelines we have already discussed. One of the striking innovations of SC with regard to the renewal of the rite of marriage is its proposal to place the celebration of marriage within the Eucharist. This suggestion is stated explicitly in SC 78, where we read that « Marriage should normally be celebrated during the mass ».<sup>20</sup> This operational principle really brings in a major transition in the evolution of the rite of marriage. As we have already seen, the early phase marriage was only a family affair, and later it was connected to the church premises – in *facie ecclesiae*. Now we find it placed within the celebration of the Eucha-

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<sup>18</sup> Second Vatican Council, § 77. See also Council of Trent, « Canons on the Reform of Marriage », 756. It states : « The holy synod earnestly desires that, if any provinces have praiseworthy customs and ceremonies in this matter, [...] these should by all means be retained ». J. D. Crichton, *The Church's Worship : Considerations on the Liturgical Constitution of the Second Vatican Council* (London : Geoffrey Chapman, 1966), 177.

<sup>19</sup> Kenneth W. Stevenson, *To Join Together : The Rite of Marriage* (New York: Pueblo, 1987), 139.

<sup>20</sup> Second Vatican Council, SC § 78. In this context, it is significant to note down the instructions given in the *Motu proprio Sacram Liturgiam*, the apostolic letter issued by Pope Paul VI, on the celebration of marriage within the Eucharistic celebration : « Concerning Article 78, we admonish all concerned that the sacrament of Matrimony must normally be celebrated during holy Mass, after the reading of the Gospel and the sermon. If Matrimony is administered outside the Mass, we order that the following rules be observed until a new ritual is established : At the beginning of this sacred rite [...] after a brief exhortation, the Gospel and Epistle of the Nuptial Mass must be read; and then let spouses receive the blessing which is contained in the Roman Ritual in Section 8, Chapter III ». Pope Paul VI, « *Motu Proprio Sacram Liturgiam* », Libreria Editrice Vaticana, [http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/motu\\_proprio/documents/hf\\_p-i-motu-proprio\\_19640125\\_sacram-liturgiam.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/motu_proprio/documents/hf_p-i-motu-proprio_19640125_sacram-liturgiam.html) (accessed 6 March 2015), § V.

rist. The celebration of marriage has essentially become an ecclesiological celebration and part of the liturgical life of the Christian community.<sup>21</sup> The introduction of the blessing of the bride and the bridegroom was another decisive step proposed in SC. « The prayer for the bride, duly amended to remind both spouses of their equal obligation to remain faithful to each other, may be said in the mother tongue ».<sup>22</sup> Thus, it demands that the nuptial blessing is given to both spouses that it is made in the local language. The third of the operational principles endorses the irreplaceable role of the liturgy of the Word in the rite of marriage. It is stated very explicitly that, even on occasions where marriage is celebrated outside mass; « the epistle and the gospel of the nuptial Mass should be read at the beginning of the ceremony ».<sup>23</sup> Hence, SC underlines the constituent role of the liturgy of the word in the rite of marriage.

The fourth and final operational principle for the renewal of the rite of marriage stresses the obligatory character of the nuptial blessing. In the rite for the celebration of marriage that existed before the Second Vatican Council, the nuptial blessing was not given when it was celebrated without the mass.<sup>24</sup> The council wanted that « the blessing *should* always be given to the couple ».<sup>25</sup> This also serves as proof for the detailed attention the Council paid to the doctrinal and juridical dimensions in its proposal for the renewal of the rite of marriage. We can summarize that those principles are the building stones for the reform of the rite of marriage. They provide the active evolution of a revised typical version of the rite. Within this framework, let us move on to discuss the reasons that necessitated the

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<sup>21</sup> Stevenson, *To Join Together: The Rite of Marriage*, 125. See also Josef Andreas Jungmann, « Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II », ed. Herbert Vorgrimler (New York: The Crossroad, 1989), 78. In relation to the context of celebration of marriage, Andrea Grillo gives a legitimate articulation: « The new expressions of the ritual ('within the Celebration of the Word' or 'within the Eucharistic Celebration') explicitly indicate, celebrationally and ecclesially, a context of listening, of prayer, of praise, of thanks giving, within which the celebration of marriage finds 'its' word ». Andrea Grillo, « Marriage and the Rite: a Liturgical Spirituality for Married Life », *INTAMS Review* II, no. 2 (2005), 175.

<sup>22</sup> Second Vatican Council, *SC*, § 78.

<sup>23</sup> Second Vatican Council, *SC*, § 78. See also Crichton, *The Church's Worship*, 178.

<sup>24</sup> National Conference of Catholic Bishops of the United States, *The 1964 English Ritual, Collectio Rituum* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1964), 385–6. We can see Stevenson reminds it when he evaluates the 1969 *Ordo*: « It will be remembered that in the old Order without mass, the nuptial blessing was not given, only a meager blessing of the couple », Stevenson, *Nuptial Blessing: A Study of Christian Marriage Rites*, 188.

<sup>25</sup> Second Vatican Council, *SC*, § 78. See also Crichton, *The Church's Worship*, 178; Annibale Bugnini, *The Reform of the Liturgy 1948–1975*, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1990), 697. Italics added for emphasis.

formulation of the 1991 typical edition of the *Ordo Celebrandi Matrimonium* and examine its ritual novelty and theological implications.

### 3. THE TWO TYPICAL EDITIONS OF THE *ORDO CELEBRANDI MATRMONIUM*

In order to respond to the Second Vatican Council's recommendations and proposals for the renewal of the various liturgical rites, a *Consilium for the Implementation of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*<sup>26</sup> with different study groups for each rite (sacrament and sacramental) was established.<sup>27</sup> Each study group, assisted by a secretary, was chaired by a Relator who was expected to prepare and present the schema and the revised text with the rite before the plenary assembly of the Consilium for its examination and approval. The study group for the rite of marriage was launched in March 1964, and they had to take into account the guidelines given in the SC and the later instructions provided in the *motu proprio, Sacram Liturgiam* and *Inter Oecumenici*.<sup>28</sup> Later in 1968, the plenary session of the Consilium approved a new rite for a trial period.<sup>29</sup> In this long

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<sup>26</sup> Here after this name will be quoted as Consilium.

<sup>27</sup> Stevenson gives a detailed description of the assignment of the Consilium : « After the Constitution was passed, the *Consilium Liturgicum* set up various study groups that were to be charged with drawing up new rites in accord with the Constitution. It was left to Groups 22 and 23 to deal with the new *Rituale*; Group 23 in particular was given the task of compiling the new *Ordo Celebrandi Matrimonium* in consultation with the other group », Stevenson, *To Join Together: The Rite of Marriage*, 127.

<sup>28</sup> *Sacram Liturgiam* and *Inter Oecumenici* are the instructions given for the renewal of the liturgy and the specific stipulations in relation to the rite of marriage received our special attention and we have pointed them out in the second part of this chapter. Pope Paul VI, « Motu Proprio Sacram Liturgiam », Libreria Editrice Vaticana [http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-ii/en/motu\\_proprio/documents/hf\\_p-vi\\_motu-proprio\\_19640125\\_sacram-liturgiam.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-ii/en/motu_proprio/documents/hf_p-vi_motu-proprio_19640125_sacram-liturgiam.html) (accessed 6 March 2015); Sacred Congregation of Rites, « Instruction on Implementing the Constitution On Sacred Liturgy, *Inter Oecumenici* », The Catholic Liturgical Library, <http://www.catholicliturgy.com/index.cfm/FuseAction/documentText/Index/2/SubIndex/16/ContentIndex/382/Start/378> (accessed 13 March 2015).

<sup>29</sup> Annibale Bugnini presents the evolution of the new *Ordo* in briefly : « Meanwhile study group 23, in collaboration with group 22, began its examination of the entire subject. It held special meetings at Mont Saint Odile (Strasbourg) in December 1965, at Le Saulchoir (Paris) in March 1966, and at Verona in June of the same year. In the following October it was able to present the Consilium with a first report on the general structure. At the next general meeting (April 1967) it presented the first three chapters of the new *Ordo* and, in November of that year, the complete schema in a final form that could be used for experimentation. The most important and impressive of these experiments was the one conducted by Pope

process of the revision of the rite of marriage, some of the significant questions to be addressed included « the relationship between the rite when celebrated during the mass and when not, the nuptial blessing itself, the shape of the rite of marriage, and the use of vernacular languages ».<sup>30</sup> These concerns, to a certain extent, were addressed in the renewed and revised edition of the *Ordo Celebrandi Matrimonium* of 1969, but the historical fact that a revision of this new edition was needed, within a relatively short period, shows clearly that the 1969 edition had certain limitations.

In 1991 a new revised edition was promulgated for the rite of marriage, and it did not totally depart from the 1969 edition. Rather, it included much theological enrichment and a number of ritual modifications. The quite long Introduction in the new version can be seen as an attestation to the fact that a very serious and detailed reflection went into the revision and formulation of the new edition. Added to this, the new insights and theological understanding of marriage and the family reflected in the post-conciliar documents such as *Familiaris Consortio* (1980), the Apostolic Exhortation of John Paul II on the family, and the Code of Canon Law (1983) greatly motivated and were rightly integrated into the formulation of the new 1991 version. From the perspective of ritual improvement, the cultural elements and practices related to the wedding ceremonies in different countries and cultures were respectfully considered in the revision and indirectly influenced the enrichment of this version.<sup>31</sup> Emphasizing the theological and ritual progress represented by the new edition, the promulgating Decree affirms that in the « second typical edition the same *Ordo* is presented with an enrichment of the introduction, rites and prayers, and with certain changes introduced in keeping with the norm of the Code of Canon Law promulgated in 1983 ».<sup>32</sup> Thus, it emphasizes that the *aggiornamento* demanded by the Second Vatican Council is more radically realized in the new edition, as it inculcates the Church's renewed reflections on

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Paul VI himself at the International Eucharistic Congress in Bogotá in August 1968. The Pope used the rite in marrying twenty four couples with the enthusiastic participation of a huge crowd », Bugnini, *The Reform of the Liturgy*, 697–8.

<sup>30</sup> Stevenson, *To Join Together: The Rite of Marriage*, 128.

<sup>31</sup> David William Antonio, « The 1991 Typical Edition of the *Ordo Celebrandi Matrimonium* », *The ICST Journal* 3 (2001), 32. See also Antonio, *An Inculturation Model of the Catholic Marriage Ritual*, 6; Adrien Nocent, « The Christian Rite of Marriage in the West » in *Handbook for Liturgical Studies*, ed. Anscar J. Chupungco (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1997), 298.

<sup>32</sup> The International Commission on English in the Liturgy, « The Order of Celebrating Marriage », ICEL [http://www.iceleweb.org/Ed/Marriage%20-%202013%20Gray%20Book%20Lat-Eng\\_Merged.pdf](http://www.iceleweb.org/Ed/Marriage%20-%202013%20Gray%20Book%20Lat-Eng_Merged.pdf) (accessed 18 October 2014).

marriage and the family in response to current pastoral aspirations and expectations.<sup>33</sup>

#### 4. A STRUCTURAL AND TEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF THE 1991 ORDO CELEBRANDI MATRIMONIUM

We briefly explored two millennia of the historical evolution of the Christian rite of marriage to its final expression in the *Ordo Celebrandi Matrimonium* of 1991.<sup>34</sup> Now in this session, we make a selective textual and ritual analysis of this edition in order to show that the ROCM can be considered as a case for analyzing the creative exchange between the traditional and cultural elements in the rite of marriage, as well as the theological developments and their influence on the rite of marriage specially after the Second Vatican Council.

##### 4.1. *The Liturgical Procession*

According to Nicole Belmont, who studied the role of the bridal procession in the Middle Ages, one of the significant features of popular marriage rituals in that period was the bridal procession, a ceremony known in Latin as the *traductio*.<sup>35</sup> Here, the bride is led from her house to the church and then to the bridegroom's house, and normally this procession is done in an atmosphere of joy, dance and feasting, implying that the father is handing over his daughter to the bridegroom and that the bridegroom, in turn, takes her to his house. There is a religious ritual « enacted midway » within the church that « serves to ratify » this giving and taking process.<sup>36</sup> From this perspective, the bridal procession and handing over of the woman seem to focus on « a male point of view », the woman being considered an « object » to be handed over from « one owner to another ».<sup>37</sup> In addition to this, the wedding procession had one further function in the Medieval period. It emphasized the « public character » of the wedding ceremony, whereby the members of the community could

<sup>33</sup> Antonio, « The 1991 Typical Edition of the Ordo Celebrandi Matrimonium », 32; See also Antonio, *An Inculturation Model of the Catholic Marriage Ritual*, 7.

<sup>34</sup> Hereafter, for the practical purpose we will abbreviate the 1969 *Ordo Celebrandi Matrimonium* as OCM and the typical 1991 *Ordo Celebrandi Matrimonium* as ROCM.

<sup>35</sup> Nicole Belmont, « The Symbolic Function of the Wedding Procession in the Popular Rituals of Marriage », in *Ritual, Religion, and the Sacred*, ed. Robert Forster and Orest Ranum (Baltimore : Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), 1–2.

<sup>36</sup> Belmont, « The Symbolic Function of the Wedding Procession », 2; Kirsti S. Thomas, « Medieval and Renaissance Marriage : Theory and Customs » <http://celyn.drizzlehosting.com/mrwp/mrwed.html> (accessed 30 November 2014).

<sup>37</sup> Belmont, « The Symbolic Function of the Wedding Procession », 2.



express their approval or disapproval of this particular marriage which was to be celebrated shortly.<sup>38</sup>

Against this background, the ROCM provides for the reception of both the bride and the bridegroom at the door of the church, as well as the subsequent procession to their designated place. This could be conceived, as Stevenson has suggested, as « emerging out of the old Roman thinking about marriage », <sup>39</sup> where the focus was on the bride. Replacing *the bridal procession* of the Medieval period with the *procession of the couple*, the conciliar and post-conciliar teachings emphasize the equality between the bride and bridegroom. According to *Gaudium et Spes*, the marriage is « the human action in which spouses give themselves to each other and accept each other ». <sup>40</sup> It also states that « in their marital covenant, [spouses] help and serve each other in their intimate union of persons and activities, and from day to day experience and increase their sense of oneness ». <sup>41</sup> According to these understandings, marriage between Christians is considered a covenant, where neither the man nor the woman is higher or lower. Rather they are equal, and each is called to accept the other in love. Additionally, the liturgical procession of the bride and bridegroom together with the priest and assembly tends to raise an important question : who is the real minister of the sacrament of marriage ? Gerard M. Lukken comments that « [i]n a non-verbal way, the bridal couple is being installed as protagonists of the celebration ». <sup>42</sup> Agreeing with Lukken's comments Antonio,

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<sup>38</sup> Belmont, « The Symbolic Function of the Wedding Procession », 5; Thomas, « Medieval and Renaissance Marriage : Theory and Customs » (accessed 30 November 2014).

<sup>39</sup> Stevenson, *To Join Together : The Rite of Marriage*, 217–218.

<sup>40</sup> Second Vatican Council, « Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*, 7 December, 1965 », in *Decrees of the Ecumenical councils : Trent to Vatican II*, ed. Norman Tanner and Giuseppe Alberigo (Washington : Georgetown University Press, 1990), § 48.

<sup>41</sup> Second Vatican Council, « *Gaudium et Spes* », § 48; Holy See, « Charter of the Rights of the Family », *L'Osservatore Romano* 811, no. 48 (1983), 3. « The spouses, in the natural complementarity which exists between man and woman, enjoy the same dignity and equal rights regarding the marriage ».

<sup>42</sup> Gerard M. Lukken, « Relevance of Semiotic Analysis to the Liturgical Sciences Illustrated in the Light of the Rite of Marriage », in *Per Visibilia ad Invisibilia: Anthropological, Theological, and Semiotic Studies on the Liturgy and the Sacraments*, ed. Louis van Tongeren and Charles Caspers (Kampen: Kok Pharos Publishing House, 1994), 303; Antonio, *An Inculturation Model of the Catholic Marriage Ritual*, 24; Pope Paul VI, « The Sacramental Covenant in the Dimension of Sign », *L'Osservatore Romano* 767, no. 3 (1983), 9.

holds that it is the « couple [who] are the real ministers of the sacramental celebration ».<sup>43</sup>

Hence, we may affirm that the entrance rite, while preparing the couples and the assembly inwardly for the celebration the entrance rite, with its welcoming of the couples in a solemn manner and the introductory prayers, presents the theological meaning of this liturgical action more profoundly.

#### 4.2. *The Scrutiny before the Consent*

The part of the rite of marriage known as the scrutiny before the consent seems to have found a place in the Roman rite, being derived from popular customs among the Germanic tribes in the eleventh century. It is recorded that in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries the « formal request of consent » occurred in French rituals, and in fourteenth century this began to take place in Germany. Later, by the fifteenth century, it became a regular practice in the Roman rite of marriage.<sup>44</sup> The scrutiny offers a significant opportunity for the couple to make a « solemn profession » of their consent to enter into marriage and accept the marital responsibilities in the presence of the ecclesial community. In addition, it « strengthens and intensifies the commitment the couple is taking on in the sight of God ».<sup>45</sup> The rite of marriage prevailing before the Second Vatican Council had only one formal question, « N., do you take N., here present, for your lawful wife/husband according to the rite of our holy Mother, the Church ? » to which the bride/bridegroom responded : « I

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<sup>43</sup> Antonio, *An Inculturation Model of the Catholic Marriage Ritual*, 24. Pope Paul VI, « Man Called to Overcome Concupiscence », *L'Osservatore Romano* 771, no. 7 (1983), 11; Pope John Paul II, « Corporate Consciously in the Work of Creation in Christ's Love », *L'Osservatore Romano* 806, no. 43 (1983), 3; In all these references the Pope asserts that the « spouses are the real ministers of the sacrament of marriage ». It is also very significant to mention the work of Hélène Bricout, namely : *Le mariage entre consentement et bénédiction: Le sacrement et son ministre*. In this work, she investigates on the question, who is the real ministers of the sacrament of marriage while revisiting the liturgy of marriage and the respective roles of the couples and ordained minister in the constitution of the sacrament of marriage. Hélène Bricout, *Le mariage entre consentement et bénédiction: Le sacrement et son ministre*, (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 2015).

<sup>44</sup> Stevenson, *Nuptial Blessing : a Study of Christian Marriage Rites*, 183.

<sup>45</sup> Bugnini, *The Reform of the Liturgy*, 702; Antonio, *An Inculturation Model of the Catholic Marriage Ritual*, 25; The idea proposed by Pope John Paul II becomes relevant here : « marriage consent has especially the character of a reciprocal profession of the newlyweds made before God ». Pope John Paul II, « The Sacramental Covenant in the Dimension of Sign », *L'Osservatore Romano* 767, no. 3 (1983), 9.

do ».<sup>46</sup> But, some significant changes are evident in the structure and formulation of the questions in the ROCM. There are three questions for the scrutiny and they disclose some essential elements of the Church's teaching on the sacrament of marriage : « the freedom of the couple », the « indissolubility of marriage », and the « procreation and education of children ».<sup>47</sup>

When we try to make a comparative study of the questions, we observe a remarkable shift in one of the traditional teachings concerning the goods of marriage. According to Augustine, there are three goods of marriage : in the case of individual « men », the good of marriage include « the cause of generation and in the fidelity of chastity », and « in the case of the people of God [...] the good is also in the sanctity of the sacrament ».<sup>48</sup> When we come to the Code of Canon Law of 1917, we observe a hierarchical gradation in the « ends or purposes of marriage ». It states : « The primary end of marriage is the procreation and education of children; its secondary end is mutual help and the allaying of concupiscence ».<sup>49</sup> Departing to some extent from this view, the Second Vatican Council affirmed that « [conjugal] love [...] involves the good of the whole person, and therefore can enrich the expressions of body and mind with a unique dignity » in a way that « far excels mere erotic inclination ».<sup>50</sup> The 1983 Code of Canon Law takes up the teachings of the Council and deconstructs the hierarchical approach developed in the 1917 Code : « The matrimonial covenant, by which a man and a woman establish between themselves a partnership of the whole of life and which is ordered by its nature to the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of offspring ».<sup>51</sup> When we come to the rite of marriage and the scrutiny before the declaration of consent, we can also see the resurfacing of this deconstructed theology of the

<sup>46</sup> National Conference of Catholic Bishops of the United States, *The 1964 English Ritual, Collectio Rituum*, 366.

<sup>47</sup> Antonio, *An Inculturation Model of the Catholic Marriage Ritual*, 25.

<sup>48</sup> Aurelius Augustine, « The Good of Marriage », in *St. Augustine : Treatises on Marriage and other Subjects*, ed. Roy J. Deferrari (New York : The Catholic University of America Press, 1955), 48.

<sup>49</sup> T. Lincoln Bouscaren and Adam C. Ellis, *Canon Law: A Text and Commentary* (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Company, 1951), § 1013.

<sup>50</sup> Second Vatican Council, « *Gaudium et Spes* », § 49.

<sup>51</sup> *Code of Canon Law* (Latin-English Edition), (*Washington: Canon Law Society of America, 1999*), § 1055, 1. *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* also takes up this canon and teaches that « [t]he matrimonial covenant, by which a man and a woman establish between themselves a partnership of the whole of life, is by its nature ordered toward the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of offspring ». *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* (New Delhi : Theological Publications in India, 1996), § 1601.

goods of marriage in the rite of marriage. *Firstly*, the Church confirms that whether the spouses are ready to embrace a *partnership of love and fidelity for the whole of life*. *Secondly*, it scrutinizes whether they are ready to accept *children as the fruit of this conjugal life*. Hereby, we can affirm that the deconstruction of the hierarchy of the goods of marriage is underscored by the celebration of marriage, and that these two ends are the complementary goods of marriage.

#### 4.3. *The Blessing and Exchange of Rings*

The practice of the bridegroom's conferring a ring upon the bride was generally attached to the betrothal ceremony in pagan culture and was adopted as a Christian Roman custom in the early centuries.<sup>52</sup> When the betrothal had concluded it was accepted as definite evidence of the betrothal ceremony. This acceptance was considered as an attestation of the agreement between the bride and bridegroom. Generally, it was viewed as one of the significant procedures of the betrothal.<sup>53</sup> In such situations, the exchange of rings had been considered an alternative to other forms of acceptance. However, over time, the exchange of rings took on an added significance in the celebration of marriage. Philip Lyndon Reynolds mentions that « [a] law in the *Visigothic* code under the rubric *De non revocandis datis arris* determines that once a couple had become betrothed and a ring had been conferred as *arrha*, then even if there were no agreement in writing, the promise was binding unless it was dissolved by mutual consent ».<sup>54</sup> This shows that the exchange of rings gradually took on an important position in the betrothal ceremony, replacing the acceptance process. Yet as the betrothal was amalgamated into the marriage ceremony, the betrothal ring has changed into the wedding ring.<sup>55</sup>

Isidore of Seville mentions that the ring, in relation to wedding ceremonies, is considered as a « sign of mutual faithfulness » and symbolizes that the hearts of the couple are « bound by a single

<sup>52</sup> Searle and Stevenson, *Documents of the Marriage Liturgy*, 2; For a detailed understanding of betrothal refer also Reg H Marcus, « The Case for Betrothal », in *Celebrating Christian Marriage*, ed. Adrian Thatcher (Edinburgh : T & T Clark, 2001), 44–54.

<sup>53</sup> According to the betrothal rite given by H Marcus the exchange of ring[s] is mentioned as the « sign of betrothal ». H Marcus, « The Case for Betrothal », 54.

<sup>54</sup> Reynolds, *Marriage in the Western Church*, 79.

<sup>55</sup> Searle and Stevenson, *Documents of the Marriage Liturgy*, 2; H Marcus, « The Case for Betrothal », 45–46.

pledge ».<sup>56</sup> As the symbolic meaning of the wedding ring came to be recognized, the exchange of rings became an indispensable part of the Christian marriage rite. In the Tridentine rite of marriage, the exchange of rings followed immediately after the *Introduction* by the priest. It provided an option for the conferral of just one ring, to be given by the groom to the bride, or two rings, in a mutual exchange. Depending on the number of rings, there existed different blessings over the rings.<sup>57</sup> The ROCM took this symbolic action into the rite of marriage, but simplified the 1614 Roman Ritual. Here, the Tridentine option for the blessing over a single ring is avoided, and a mutual exchange of rings is preferred. This is of great significance, as it symbolically represents the equality between the bride and groom. Following the prayer over the rings, the priest sprinkles holy water on them and gives them to the couple. They are first given to the bridegroom, then to the bride who places one of the rings on the ring finger of her partner, saying : « N., receive this ring as a sign of my love and fidelity. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit » (no. 67). According to Stevenson this formula is « based on the earliest texts », that is, the text on the « marriage of Judith, daughter of Charles the Bald, to Edilwulf, King of East Anglia in 856 C.E ».<sup>58</sup> The formula echoes what the exchange of rings symbolically represents : namely, the ring as the sign of love and fidelity. Hence, the exchange of rings presupposes the mutual love and fidelity that the couple will exchange during their marital life.

In addition, when we compare the new rite with the Tridentine version, we find a transition of roles in pronouncing the formula when bride and bridegroom exchange their rings. In the 1614 *Ordo*, while the bridegroom placed the ring on the finger of the bride, it was the priest who pronounces : « In the name of the Father +, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit » and he continued to pray for the spouses.<sup>59</sup> In such a context, the role of the priest was very dominant. But in the ROCM (no.67), the bride and bridegroom pronounce this formula themselves while placing the ring on the finger of their partner. This change is remarkable, as it reiterates the concept which the rite expressed earlier, during the procession, that the

<sup>56</sup> Searle and Stevenson, *Documents of the Marriage Liturgy*, 119. Reynolds, *Marriage in the Western Church*, 92.

<sup>57</sup> There was an option in the process of giving the rings : It can be *singular*, the bridegroom giving the ring to the bride or it can be *plural*, and in the sense they mutually exchange the rings.

<sup>58</sup> Stevenson, *To Join Together : The Rite of Marriage*, 140 ; see also Antonio, *An Inculturation Model of the Catholic Marriage Ritual*, 30; Stevenson, *Nuptial Blessing : A Study of Christian Marriage Rites*, 45.

<sup>59</sup> Searle and Stevenson, *Documents of the Marriage Liturgy*, 4.

couples are the real ministers of the sacrament of marriage and that marriage is a reciprocal act in which the bride and the groom are mutually responsible. However, the role of the priest, comparatively less than in the Tridentine version, is also recognized in the new rite. Furthermore, the couple now exchanges the rings in the name of the Trinity, recalling the Trinity's role in the sacrament of marriage and the divine assistance needed to honor their lifelong commitment.

Even though the liturgical reformers kept the text for the blessing and exchange of rings « very simple », then, and sought to « shorten the time » it occupied in the rite, they have in fact contributed to enriching the theological meaning of this liturgical action more profoundly and authentically. It could be rightly affirmed that the blessing of the rings and their exchange presented in the new versions are not only a « confirmation of the consent » or « an explanatory rite ». In addition, some of the essential elements of marriage, such as love, fidelity and equality between the spouses, and the active role of the couples in the celebration of the marriage, etc., are made explicit in this liturgical action.

#### 4.4. *The Nuptial Blessing*

In the tradition of Christian marriage, there was the common understanding that in and through marriage a girl became a « fully legal person » with her own rights and privileges. This understanding was predominant and this transition marks great significance in her family and social life.<sup>60</sup> From this perspective, the celebration of marriage assumed a specific role in the life of the woman and its various customs were made to signify the moment of a transition in life. It is in this context that the practice of blessing *only* the bride evolved in relation to the wedding ceremony. This continued down through the centuries, was still customary even during the time of Vatican II, and remained so till the formulation of the rite of marriage in 1969. Throwing light on the revision of the sacrament of marriage, Vatican II emphasized that « the blessing of the bride should be replaced by the blessing of the spouses ».<sup>61</sup> Taking into account the conciliar directive, the OCM reformulated the traditional Gregorian text for the nuptial blessing, which was in use in the rite of marriage from the time of the *Missale Romanum* (1570)<sup>62</sup> till the formulation of the

<sup>60</sup> Searle and Stevenson, *Documents of the Marriage Liturgy*, 5.

<sup>61</sup> Second Vatican Council, *SC*, § 78; See also, Crichton, *The Church's Worship*, 177.

<sup>62</sup> Mark Searle and Kenneth W. Stevenson, *Documents of the Marriage Liturgy*, 47, 182. Stevenson, *To Join Together: The Rite of Marriage*, 140–1; Stevenson, *Nuptial Blessing: a Study of Christian Marriage Rites*, 187; Herman Schmidt, « Rituals and Sacramentality of Marriage », *Studia Missionalia* 23 (1974), 270.

new version of the rite of marriage in 1969, with some modifications and changes. Though this revised version was generally well received, there were further points of disagreement on the text and a revised version is given in the ROCM.

When we analyse the first text for the nuptial blessing (ROCM, no.73) we observe that the bride-centred prayer was refocused and made more spouse-centered. The invitation begins with a request that the assembly prays for both spouses rather than for the bride alone : « let us humbly pray to the Lord that on *these his servants*, now married in Christ » (ROCM, no.73). The priestly prayer is re-constructed along the same lines, focusing on « *man and woman* in [God's] own image » rather than *man alone* as the image of God (ROCM, no.74).<sup>63</sup> Further, the ROCM grants a space for the inclusion of an *epiclesis* or invocation of the Holy Spirit during the time of nuptial blessing in the celebration of marriage : « Send down on them the grace of the Holy Spirit and pour your love into their hearts, that they may remain faithful in the Marriage covenant » (ROCM, no.74). Basically, this is a sign of the influence of the developed teachings on the role of the Holy Spirit in the sacraments in general and very specially in the sacrament of marriage<sup>64</sup>. In *Familiaris Consortio*, Pope John Paul II teaches that « [t]he Holy Spirit, who is poured forth in the celebration of the sacraments, is the living source and inexhaustible sustenance of the supernatural communion that gathers believers and links them with Christ and with each other in the unity of the Church of God ».<sup>65</sup> The role of the Holy Spirit is specifically mentioned by the Pope while exploring the relationship between the Holy Spirit and the sacraments. The Pope stated that the sacrament of marriage is the « *human participation in that divine love* which has been 'poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit' (Rom 5:5) ».<sup>66</sup> Also significant and noteworthy is his teaching that it is « precisely from the power of the Holy Spirit » that the union between the couple takes place on the « proper level of persons (*communio personarum*) ».<sup>67</sup> Hence, with regard to the sac-

<sup>63</sup> Italics added for emphasis and to show the difference between OCM and ROCM.

<sup>64</sup> ROCM makes it clear that « through this Sacrament the Holy Spirit brings it about that, just as Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her, Christian spouses also strive to nurture and foster their union in equal dignity, mutual giving, and the undivided love that flows from the divine font of charity » (ROCM, no.9).

<sup>65</sup> Pope John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, § 41. Carlo Rocchetta, « Marriage as a Sacrament towards a New Theological Conceptualization », *INTAMS review* 2, no. 1 (1996), 16.

<sup>66</sup> Pope John Paul II, « Spirit : Source of Sacramental Life », *L'Osservatore Romano*, no. 5 (1991), 11.

<sup>67</sup> Pope John Paul II, « Christian Spirituality of Marriage Possible Only by Living According to the Spirit », *L'Osservatore Romano* 861, no. 47 (1984), 1.

rament of marriage, the criticism over the negligence of the role of the Holy Spirit in the OCM was addressed in the ROCM by the inclusion of the prayer to the Holy Spirit in the nuptial blessing. Thus, the analysis of the nuptial blessing shows that the reconstruction of the prayer for the nuptial blessing was mainly concerned with shifting from a bride-centeredness to a new focus on both of the spouses and the inclusion of the role of the Holy Spirit in the celebration of marriage. The nuptial blessing also affirms that marriage is a great mystery by which the covenantal relationship of the bride and bridegroom symbolizes the sacramental relationship between Christ and the Church.

In short, in this section, we have selected and analysed four different rituals existing in the ROCM. We explored that those elements were significant parts of the traditional marriage ceremonies. At present, they are adapted to the ROCM but it is very noticeable that those customs or practices are revised and renewed in such a way by inculcating the insights from the most recent magisterial teachings relevant to marriage. Hence, the liturgy of marriage could express the meaning of the sacrament of marriage in an authentic way. With its enrichment, once again it provides an opportunity to reflect on the unique dimensions of the rite of marriage, the significance of the grace of God in establishing the sacrament of marriage and enabling the couple to fulfil their marital responsibilities in a responsible manner.

#### CONCLUDING REMARKS : TRADITION AND THEOLOGY – COMPLEMENTARY OR CONTRADICTORY ?

The goal of this paper has been to investigate the relation between the traditional liturgical practices and the theological developments in the context of the liturgy of marriage. Are they contradictory or complementary ? The short analysis undertaken here prompts us to affirm the creative exchange that took place between the traditional rituals and progressive theology of marriage down through the history of the evolution of the rite of marriage. It is a matter of fact that the transition of marriage ceremonies as a family affair to an ecclesial affair as we have it today is the result of a long evolutionary process. With respect to the structure of the rite of marriage, we can clearly observe its continuity with the long evolution of the rite of marriage. As in the past, the new rite of marriage begins with the procession and continues with the declaration and reception of the consent and exchange of rings. In other words, the traditional liturgical elements which clearly express the meaning of the sacrament of marriage are given a prominent place in the new rite. However, the



novelty stems from the specificity, clarity and emphasis that the revision has given to certain aspects of the celebration of marriage.

A significant improvement comes from theologians' efforts to enrich the 1991 typical edition of the *Ordo Celebrandi Matrimonium* by expressing within it the theological and pastoral vision envisaged by the Second Vatican Council, the post-conciliar apostolic letter, *Familiaris Consortio*, and the Code of Canon Law of 1983. Going further, the new text clearly articulates in its prayers and blessings at once the covenantal character of marriage, its indissolubility, and the responsibilities of partners, such as mutual love and fidelity and the procreation and education of children. Hence, ROCM goes far beyond the then existing rites of marriage by more firmly asserting and clearly expressing a spouse-centred character of the sacrament of marriage.

All these legitimately enable us to conclude that the relationship between the traditional liturgical practices and the theological developments are not contradictory. Rather they are complementary and creative. The wedding liturgical practices of the faithful are enriched by the theological developments and reflections on the sacramental bond of marriage. At the same time, it is proved that some of the liturgical practices that existed in the tradition of the church as customs and practices entered into the realm of the theological discussions and took a significant role in the reform of the rite of marriage. Additionally, the relationship between tradition and theology had a corrective or reformative function. Hence, it also aimed at the recognition and rectification of the customs and practices which did not adequately convey the meaning of marriage and which were not properly Catholic in practice and meaning. And, it is a never-ending process.

Jolly VASUPURATHUKARAN PAVUNNY

## SUMMARY

After a long evolutionary process, the marriage ceremonies, before a family affair, became today an ecclesial celebration. As in the past, the new rite of marriage, according to the new *Ordo Celebrandi Matrimonium* (1991 typical edition) begins with the procession and continues with the declaration and reception of the consent, then with the exchange of rings. These traditional liturgical elements clearly express the meaning of the sacrament of marriage and have taken a prominent place in its new rite, owing to the theologians' effort to enrich the 1991 *Ordo* by expressing within it the theological and pastoral vision envisaged by the Second Vatican Council, the post-conciliar apostolic letter, *Familiaris Consortio*, and the Code of Canon Law of 1983.

Further, the new Ordo clearly associates in its prayers and blessings at once the covenantal character of marriage, its indissolubility, and the responsibilities of partners, such as mutual love and fidelity and the procreation and education of children. Hence, the new Ordo goes far beyond the then existed rites by more firmly asserting a spouse-centred character of the sacrament of marriage. So, the traditional liturgical practices and the theological developments are not in contradiction, but their relationship is rather complementary and creative.

## RÉSUMÉ

Après un long processus évolutif, les cérémonies de mariage, autrefois une affaire de famille, sont devenues aujourd'hui une célébration ecclésiale. Comme par le passé, le nouveau rituel du mariage de l'Ordo celebrandi matrimonium (édition typique de 1991), commence par la procession et se poursuit avec la déclaration et réception du consentement, puis par l'échange des anneaux. Ces éléments liturgiques traditionnels expriment clairement le sens du sacrement du mariage et ont pris une place prééminente dans son nouveau rite, grâce à l'effort accompli par des théologiens pour enrichir l'Ordo de 1991 et en faire une expression de la vision théologique et pastorale envisagée par le Concile de Vatican II, la lettre apostolique post-conciliaire *Familiaris Consortio*, et le Code de Droit canonique de 1983. De plus, le nouvel Ordo associe clairement dans ses prières et bénédictions la dimension d'alliance que recèle le mariage, son indissolubilité et les responsabilités des conjoints concernant l'amour mutuel, la fidélité, la procréation et l'éducation des enfants. Ainsi, le nouvel Ordo va bien au-delà des rites antérieurs, par une meilleure affirmation du centrage sur les époux dans le sacrement du mariage. Ainsi, les pratiques liturgiques traditionnelles et les développements théologiques ne sont pas en contradiction, mais leurs relations sont plutôt complémentaires et créatives.